

CRIME

THE LAW
ALWAYS WINS!

SMASHERS

JULY, No. 5
10¢

WE FINALLY
FOUND YOUR HIDEOUT,
YOU CROOK. NOW WE'LL
SEND YOU AWAY FOR
A LONG STRETCH!

SPIKE, YOU'RE A DOPE
TO GET CAUGHT! BUT I'VE
GOT THE DROP ON THOSE
COPPERS - AND I'M
GETTING OUT OF
HERE, SEE?

N.S. 11
THAT'S
WHAT YOU
THINK, GIRLIE,
BUT YOU'VE GOT
A BIG SURPRISE
COMING!

featuring:
SALLY THE SLEUTH
DAN TURNER
GIRL FRIDAY
RAY HALE

CRIME CAN'T PAY — IN ANY WAY!

WEB COMIC UNIVERSE.COM



SALLY the SLEUTH

in "MURDER WEARS A MASK"

ONE DAY, "THE CHIEF", HEAD OF A PRIVATE INVESTIGATION BUREAU, SITS WITH SALLY, HIS BEAUTIFUL BLONDE ASSISTANT, DISCUSSING AN IMPORTANT EVENT OF THE NEAR FUTURE...

DON'T FORGET, SALLY, IN A COUPLE OF DAYS, YOU'RE GOING TO TESTIFY BEFORE THE GRAND JURY IN THE CASE OF NICK MORETTI. THAT GANGSTER AND THUG HAS BEEN OPERATING A TOUGH AND BRUTAL RACKET WHILE THE HEAD OF A LABOR UNION. THIS IS THE KIND OF LOUSE WE'VE GOT TO PUT BEHIND BARS TO PROTECT THE WORKING MAN AND THE PUBLIC AT LARGE.

I'LL BE ON HAND, CHIEF. I AGREE WITH YOU -- THESE LABOR RACKETEERS ARE ONLY OUT TO FEATHER THEIR OWN NESTS.

NEXT DAY, AT HOME, SALLY GETS AN UNEXPECTED NOTE...

LETTER FOR YOU, MISS.

WHAT'S THIS?
I DON'T
RECOGNIZE THE
HANDWRITING.

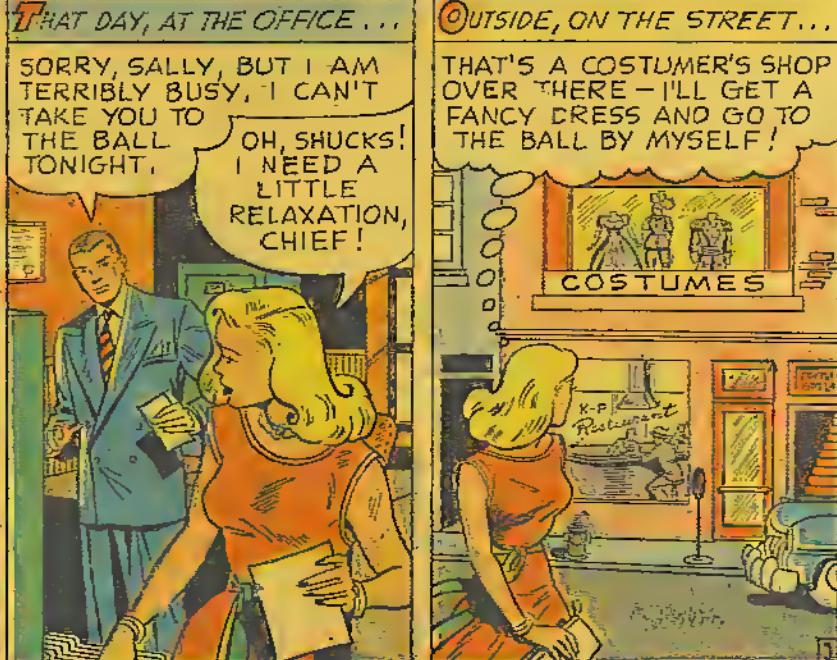


WHY, IT'S A FREE TICKET TO THE BIG BOHEMIAN BALL — THAT'S TONIGHT!

THAT DAY, AT THE OFFICE...

SORRY, SALLY, BUT I AM TERRIBLY BUSY, I CAN'T TAKE YOU TO THE BALL TONIGHT.

OH, SHUCKS! I NEED A LITTLE RELAXATION, CHIEF!



SALLY ENTERS THE SHOP...

HERE'S A LOVELY COSTUME, MISS, IT'S A HAREM NUMBER, AND ONE OF THE NEWEST WE HAVE. YOU'LL LIKE IT.



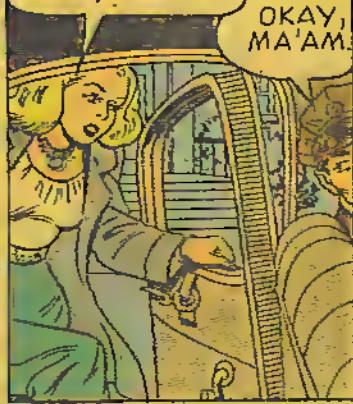
IT IS BEAUTIFUL! WRAP IT UP. I'LL HIRE IT FOR THE BOHEMIAN BALL TONIGHT.



THAT EVENING, SALLY LEAVES ALONE TO GO TO THE BALL...

TAKE ME TO MOZART HALL, CABBY...

OKAY, MA'AM.



AT THE BALL, A MAN DRESSED AS THE DEVIL SPEAKS TO A GIRL WHO IS ALONE...

HELLO, BEAUTEOUS PEARL OF THE ORIENT: MAY I HAVE THIS DANCE?

IF YOU WISH,
OH MONARCH
OF THE NETHER
REGIONS.

YOU'RE A SWELL DANCER, BABE!
THIS IS OUR LUCKY EVENING.

YOU'RE NOT SO BAD YOURSELF, MEFISTOFELES.



AS THE DANCE ENDS...

HOW ABOUT SWELL!
A LITTLE REFRESHMENT,
HONEY?

I'D LOVE IT.



THEY SIT IN A SECLUDED BOOTH...

HERE'S TO YOUR MAJESTY --

-AND HERE'S TO YOU !!



ONE VICIOUS STAB OF HIS KNIFE, AND THE DEVIL JUMPS UP AND VANISHES INTO THE MILLING THRONG...



A MOMENT LATER, OTHER GUESTS LOOK INTO THE BOOTH AND ARE HORRIFIED AT THE SIGHT ...

HERE'S A BOOTH, WE - OH !

EEE - EEEK !



SOON, THE COPS ARE ON THE SCENE ...

SHE'S DEAD, DENNIS, IT'S A JOB FOR THE HOMICIDE SQUAD.

WE'LL HOLD EVERYBODY HERE, THEY'RE ALL PRIME SUSPECTS UNTIL WE NAB THE GUILTY PARTY. WHO - WHO'S THIS ?



A GIRL IN A SIMILAR COSTUME RUSHES IN ...

HEY - YOUR RIG IS JUST LIKE THE DEAD DAME'S ! DO YOU KNOW HER ?

NO - BUT IT'S SURE LUCKY THAT THE TRAFFIC WAS THICK AND I GOT HERE LATE !



SAY, I KNOW YOU. YOU'RE THAT PRIVATE SNOOP'S ASSISTANT. AREN'T YOU ?

YES - AND I GET THE ANGLE, SOMEBODY KNEW WHAT COSTUME I PLANNED TO WEAR, AND WAS OUT TO KILL ME !



BALLY HOTFOOTS IT TO THE COSTUMER'S AND CONFRONTS THE MAN, WHO RECOILS AND CLUTCHES A HEAVY ASHTRAY ...

WHOM DID YOU TELL WHAT DRESS I HIRED FROM YOU ? DON'T LIE TO ME - YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO KNEW !

OH YEAH ? I DON'T KNOW FROM NOTHIN'. I'LL FIX YOU - !!



DON'T TRY TO KID ME ! YOU HAD A LOT TO DO WITH A MURDER TONIGHT. ... DROP THAT !

OUCH !
MY WRIST !

BANG !



COME CLEAN,
YOU RAT, OR
I'LL DRILL
YOU FOR
KEEPS !'

ALL RIGHT! ALL
RIGHT! IT WAS
NICK MORETTI.
HE PAID ME TO
TELL HIM WHAT
COSTUME YOU
HIRED.

SALLY THEN QUICKLY
PHONES HER BOSS...

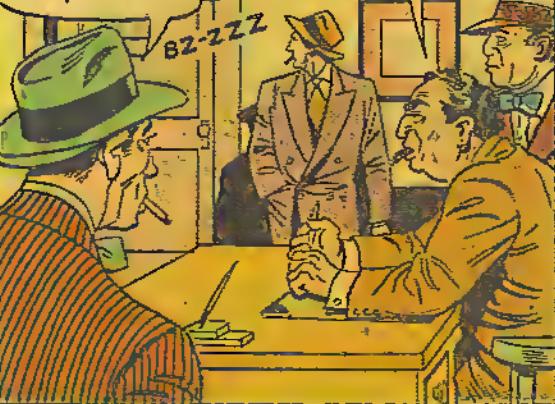
CHIEF, MORETTI'S JUST
HAD A GIRL KILLED,
THINKING IT WAS I.
I'M GOING TO HIS JOINT,
GET THE RIOT SQUAD
AND COME OVER THERE
—BUT FAST !!

WHAT, SALLY ? I'M
NOT SURPRISED, BUT
BE CAREFUL. I'LL
GET A BUNCH OF COPS
AND BE RIGHT THERE!

AT MORETTI'S HEADQUARTERS . . .

THERE GOES THE
BUZZER - WADDYA
YA WANT US TO
DO, BOSS ?

SEE WHO IT IS, I'M
EXPECTIN' A GUY.



IT WAS A CINCH,
NICK. I PICKED HER
UP AT THE DANCE
-- A COUPLE OF
DRINKS, AND WHAM!
RIGHT IN THE
GIZZARD !

OKAY, TONY,
THAT'S THE STUFF.
HERE'S YOUR
DOUGH. NOW GET
OUTTA THAT COSTUME
AND FIX
YOURSELF UP AN
ALIBI - JUST IN CASE -

HEY - IT'S A
DEVIL OUT
THERE ! WHAT
THE --

YEAH, THAT'S THE JERK
I'M EXPECTIN'. LET HIM
IN - MAKE IT SNAPPY,



SUDDENLY, THE BUZZER SOUNDS AGAIN . . .

IT'S A DAME
OUTSIDE, BOSS,

LET HER IN AND SEE
WHAT SHE WANTS.



THE LATCH IS DRAWN AND SALLY ENTERS...

I HEARD THAT, MORETTI! I WANT YOUR FRIEND THE DEVIL - FOR MURDER!

HEY - IT'S - IT'S HER GHOST!



MORETTI RAGES AT HIS HENCHMAN AS ANOTHER MUGG GRABS A CLOTH AND CREEPS UP BEHIND SALLY . . .

YOU FOOL! YOU BUMPED THE WRONG DAME. THIS IS THE REAL ONE!



THE CLOTH SWIFTLY ENVELOPS HER . . .

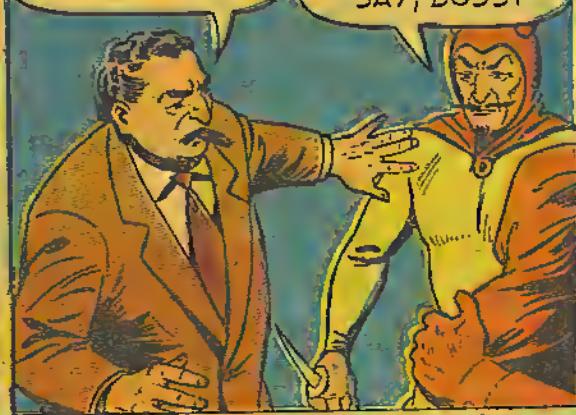
UGH! OOF!

GOOD WORK, LUIGI. I'LL MAKE SURE OF THE JOB THIS TIME.



LAY OFF THE KNIFE, TONY. WE'LL TAKE HER DOWN TO THE OLD DOCK AND FIX HER UP THERE, THEN DUMP THE BODY IN THE BAY. IT'S SAFER THAT WAY.

WHATEVER YOU SAY, BOSS.



A NOISE STARTLES THE GANGSTERS AND ONE OF THEM PEERS THROUGH THE PEEP孔 IN THE DOOR . . .

THE COPS!

BEAT IT! WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE DIS DAME CAN IDENTIFY US!



THE POLICE, LED BY THE CHIEF, PROCEED TO BREAK THE DOOR DOWN . . .

FAST, BOYS, SALLY'S INSIDE THERE!



THE RACKETEER, MORETTI, PUSHES HIS MEN ASIDE AND GOES THROUGH THE WINDOW TO THE FIRE ESCAPE . . .

GET OUT OF MY WAY!

AMOMENT LATER, THE COPS ARE INSIDE, AND PUT THE MOB UNDER ARREST . . .

STAY WHERE YOU ARE!

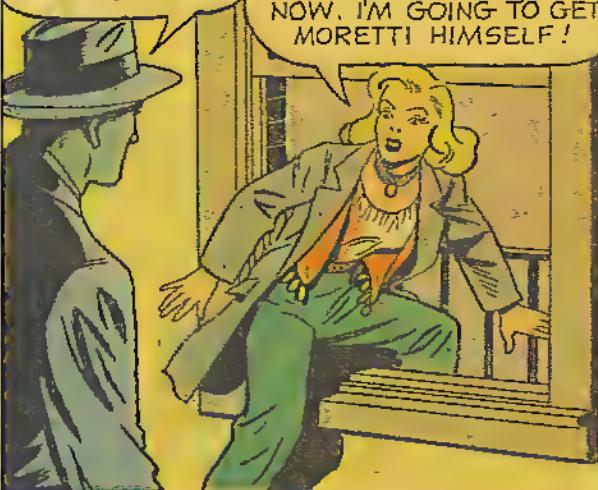
NOT A MOVE, YOU RATS!

OH, CHIEF!



YOU ALL RIGHT, SALLY? I —

SURE, CHIEF, BUT I CAN'T STOP TO TALK NOW. I'M GOING TO GET MORETTI HIMSELF!



ON THE ROOF, SALLY CATCHES SIGHT OF THE FLEEING RACKETEER . . .

THERE HE GOES! I CAN'T LET HIM GET AWAY —



HE'S CROSSING TO THE NEXT HOUSE, IF I CAN GET OVER HERE, I'LL HEAD HIM OFF. I HOPE I CAN --



SHE LANDS SAFELY, AND FINDS . . .

A LOOSE CLOTHES-LINE, FALLEN TO THE ROOF, AND RIGHT IN HIS PATH! IF THE OTHER END IS FASTENED, I'LL JUST SNAP IT, AND —



HER TRICK WORKS FINE . . .

HUMPTY DUMPTY TAKES A BIG FALL!

OW!



GET BACK DOWN THERE, YOU MURDERER! YOUR REIGN OF EVIL IN THIS TOWN IS OVER!



BACK IN THE ROOM WITH THE POLICE, SALLY CALLS ATTENTION TO THE CRINGING DEVIL...

THERE'S THE KILLER OF THAT POOR GIRL! HE DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO REMOVE HIS COSTUME, HE WAS SENT BY MORETTI TO KILL ME SO I WOULDN'T TESTIFY AGAINST HIM. BUT THERE WERE TWO SIMILAR COSTUMES AND NOW HE'LL FRY FOR MURDERING THE WRONG GIRL!



NO! NO! MORETTI'S GUILTY!
HE HIRED ME TO DO IT! I'LL PROVE IT - I'LL TURN STATE'S EVIDENCE!



MORETTI SNATCHES A GUN FROM A DESK DRAWER...



THE DESPERATE RACKETEER THEN TURNS THE GUN ON HIMSELF AND ANOTHER SHOT RINGS OUT...



WELL, CHIEF, IT HAS BEEN A HECTIC EVENING. IT LOOKS LIKE I WON'T HAVE TO GO TO COURT TO GIVE MY TESTIMONY AFTER ALL.



SEE SALLY AGAIN - NEXT ISSUE

Ray Hale

"A NOOSE FOR NEWS"

by

Ken Battefield

WHILE THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER OF THE 'CLARION', RAY HALE, IS PREPARING TO LEAVE THE NEWSPAPER OFFICE FOR LUNCH, A GHASTLY SCENE OCCURS IN THE SLUM AREA OF THE CITY...

I'D BETTER CALL THE COPS.



OUTSIDE HIS BUILDING, HALE HEARS A POLICE SIREN... HIS FRIEND, DETECTIVE SERGEANT POOLE, RIDING IN THE PATROL CAR, ORDERS THE DRIVER TO PULL OVER TO THE CURB...

WE'RE ON OUR WAY TO A HOMICIDE, HALE. WANT TO COME ALONG?

THANKS, SARGE, I SURE DO!



WHAT'S THE STORY, SERGEANT POOLE?

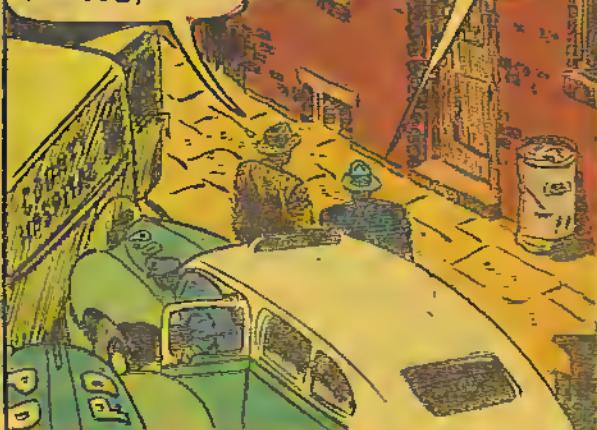
MRS. MORRISON, AN OLD LADY, WAS REPORTED STRANGLED IN HER BED, HALE.



THEY ARRIVE AT THE SCENE OF THE CRIME...

THE HOMICIDE SQUAD
AND MEDICAL EXAMINER
ARE ALREADY ON
THE JOB, HALE.

THEY WORK FAST,
SERGEANT
POOLE.



THE COP RINGS THE DOORBELL...

OHHHH, MORE
POLICE!
I'M PAMELA MORRISON.
IT'S MY MOTHER WHO
HAS BEEN MURDERED.

SHE DOESN'T
SEEM VERY
UPSET!



PAMELA LEADS THE TRIO TO A BEDROOM.
THE MEDICAL EXAMINER TALKS TO SERGEANT
POOLE ...

THAT'S THE WAY WE FOUND THE OLD
LADY. HER NECK'S BROKEN. THE
MEN ARE TAKING FINGER-
PRINTS NOW.



SERGEANT POOLE AND REPORTER
HALE GRILL PAMELA...

WILL YOU TELL WHAT HAPPENED
MISS MORRISON?

I WAS WORKING IN
THE KITCHEN WHEN I
HEARD SOUNDS FROM
MOTHER'S ROOM. I RAN
IN...AND FOUND HER...
DEAD! A MAN WAS
CRAWLING OUT THAT
WINDOW MR. HALE.



CAN YOU GIVE US HIS
DESCRIPTION?

YES, SERGEANT...
BUT I'LL NEED PROTECT-
ION. HE SAID HE'D KILL
ME IF I TALKED!



WE'LL SEE
THAT
YOU'RE NOT
HARMED,
MISS MORRISON) WAS GAUNT.. HIS
NOW TELL US LIPS WERE THICK...
ABOUT THE AND HIS NOSE WAS
MAN.

HE WAS PART WAY
OUT THE WINDOW
SO I DON'T KNOW
HIS HEIGHT.. HIS FACE
LARGE...HE WORE A
PIN-STRIPED SUIT.





THE FUGITIVE TURNS
TO SHOOT IT OUT
WITH HIS
PURSUERS...



SARGE, YOU
WINGED
HIM!
YEAH, HALE,
I GOT HIM IN
THE SHOULDER!



THAT CROOK HELD
UP MY STORE!!!
... GLAD YOU
CAUGHT HIM!

SARGE, THIS
GUNMAN FITS THE
DESCRIPTION PAMELA
GAVE US!



COME ON, GET UP!
YOU CAN WALK!

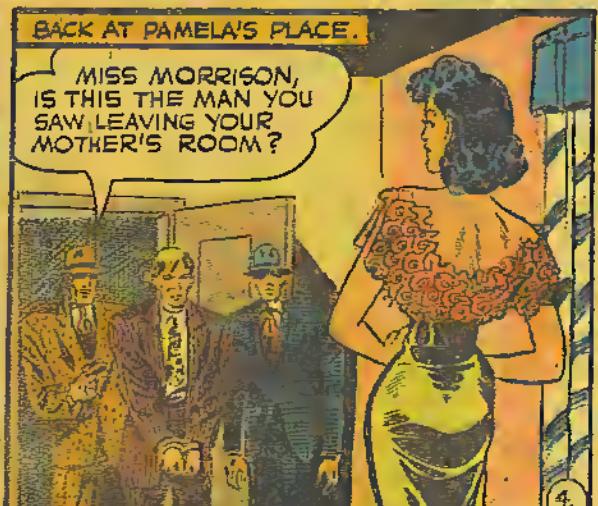


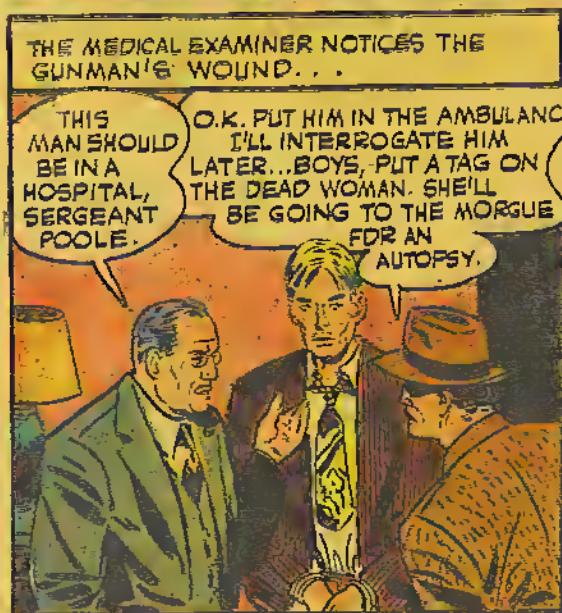
IF THIS GUY'S THE ONE
PAMELA SAW, HE'S A
NUT TO DO A STICK-UP
JOB NEAR THE MURDER
HOUSE!



BACK AT PAMELA'S PLACE.

MISS MORRISON,
IS THIS THE MAN YOU
SAW LEAVING YOUR
MOTHER'S ROOM?



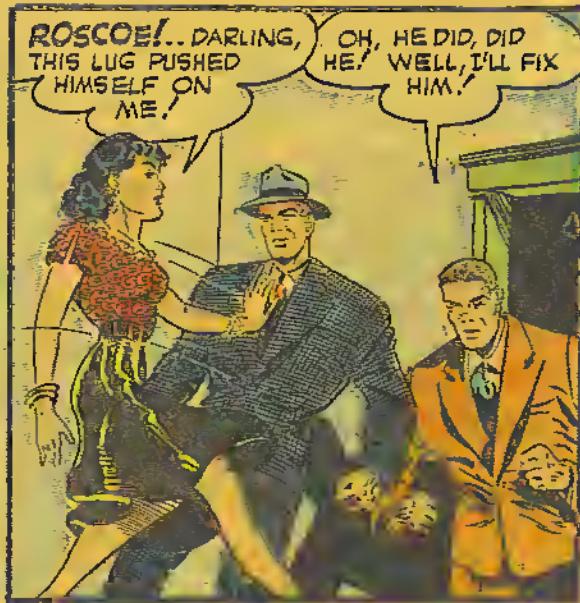


AS HALE PULLS
THE GIRL TO
HIM, THE DOOR
OPENS ...

PAMELA!
CHEATING ON ME,
HUH?

ROSCOE!.. DARLING,
THIS LUG PUSHED
HIMSELF ON
ME!

OH, HE DID, DID
HE? WELL, I'LL FIX
HIM!



THE REPORTER GRABS PAMELA'S WRIST AND TWISTS IT...

OH, NO YOU WON'T, BABY!

OWWW-W!! LET GO - YOU'RE HURTING ME!

ROSCOE REVIVES...

I DID, BROTHER. BEHAVE YOURSELF AND ANSWER SOME QUESTIONS... HOW COME YOU HAVE FREE ENTRY TO THIS HOUSE?

OHHH! WHAT HIT ME...?

I'M PAMELA'S FIANCÉ. I COME AND GO AS I PLEASE. WHAT BUSINESS IS IT OF YOURS?

I'M RAY HALE, REPORTER ON THE "CLARION". PAMELA'S MOTHER HAS APPARENTLY BEEN MURDERED. DID YOU KILL HER?

PAMELA, IS YOUR MOTHER REALLY DEAD? ANSWER ME!!

Y-Y-YES, ROSCOE.

PAMELA TELLS HER BOYFRIEND THE SAME STORY SHE TOLD HALE AND THE POLICE...

DID YOU KILL HER FOR THE INSURANCE?

NO, ROSCOE!
NO!

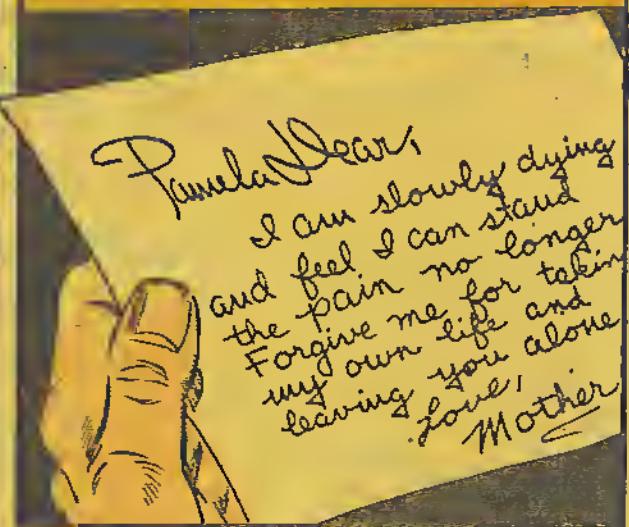
A BARRAGE OF QUESTIONS FROM THE TWO MEN CAUSES PAMELA TO CRY. SHE BREAKS DOWN AND CONFESSES THE TRUTH...

MOTHER COMMITTED SUICIDE... SHE... SHE LEFT A NOTE.

WHERE IS IT? SHOW IT TO US....



THE GIRL GOES INTO THE NEXT ROOM AND PRODUCES A PIECE OF PAPER . . .



DAN TURNER.

HOLLYWOOD DETECTIVE

in "BELLYBOARD BUMP-OFF!" by ROBERT LESLIE BELLEM

DIRECTOR SKINNY SWANSON OF PARAGON PIX, AND OLD TIME STAR OF SLAPSTICK COMEDIES, IS HAVING A SNIFFER WITH HIS PAL, DAN TURNER...

SHERLOCK, I'VE GOT TROUBLE WITH THE NEW PARAGON FARCE I'M DIRECTING!

WHISTLE THE PATTER, PAL!

I'M USING SOME OLD SLAPSTICK ROUTINES FOR MY STAR, CARY GREGG... AND HE'S TURNED YELLOW ON ME! HE'S SO SCARED HE'LL GET HURT, THAT HE'S LOUSING UP THE FOOTAGE! THAT'S ODD! I ALWAYS FIGURED GREGG WAS A FEARLESS HERO IN REAL LIFE AS WELL AS REEL LIFE!



SWANSON AND TURNER CONTINUE THEIR TALK ON A SOUND STAGE SET...

YOU'RE RIGHT, HAWKSHAW, CARY GREGG HAS ALWAYS BEEN BRAVE UNTIL NOW! YOU FIND OUT WHAT'S SCARING HIM.

SOUNDS LIKE A JOB FOR A PSYCHOANALYST, INSTEAD OF A SNOOP, BUT I'LL GIVE IT A TRY!



LATER, AS TURNER ANKLES TOWARD CARY GREGG'S DRESSING ROOM...

PLEASE, CARY, YOU'RE HURTING ME!

YOU'LL TAKE THE FIRST DRINK, OR I'LL BREAK YOUR NECK!

HEY! WHAT'S THIS -?

CARY GREGG

TURNER BARGES INTO THE ROOM...

DRINK, ELLEN, TO PROVE YOU DIDN'T GIFT ME WITH A PINT OF POISONED HOOCH!

CRIPES, THAT'S ELLEN MARSH HE'S MAULING! SHE'S NOT ONLY HIS LEADING LADY, BUT HIS SWEETHEART! WHAT GOES ON HERE?

LAY OFF, GREGG... BEFORE I LOAD YOU WITH LUMPS!

OH!

ELLEN'S IN LOVE WITH YOU! AND GOING TO MARRY YOU! SHAME ON YOU FOR SUSPECTING HER OF TRYING TO POISON YOU!

I SUSPECT EVERYBODY! THERE'S MURDER HANGING OVER MY HEAD!

CARY, YOU'RE OUT OF YOUR MIND... I'M LEAVING!

I DON'T BLAME YOU, TUTZ!

MAYBE I AM GOING NUTS! BUT I KEEP HEARING ANONYMOUS DEATH THREATS ON THE PHONE!

THAT'S BAD. BUT DON'T ACCUSE YOUR FIANCÉE. BE LOGICAL CHUM, AND TELL ME IF YOU'VE GOT ENEMIES!

THE ONLY TWO PEOPLE WHO REALLY HATE ME ARE LEW VARNUM, THE PROP MAN, AND NANCY O'DARE...
THE STUNT WOMAN WHO DOUBLES FOR ELLEN MARSH WELL, QUITE IN THIS OPUS. THERE JITTERING MAY BE OTHERS... WHILE I MAKE LIKE A PRIVATE EYE!



TURNER INTERVIEWS LEW VARNUM...

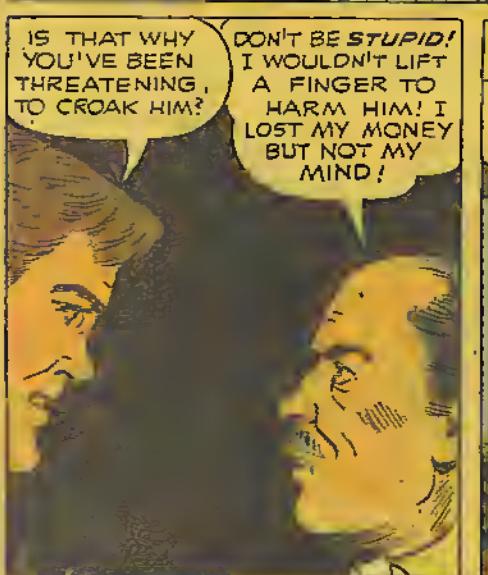
WHAT'S THIS I HEAR ABOUT YOU PACKING A GRUDGE AGAINST CARY GREGG?

THAT HEEL! I SANK MY BANKROLL IN AN OIL WELL HE TOUTED...AND I NEVER GOT BACK A SINGLE DIME!



IS THAT WHY YOU'VE BEEN THREATENING, TO CROAK HIM?

DON'T BE STUPID! I WOULDN'T LIFT A FINGER TO HARM HIM! I LOST MY MONEY BUT NOT MY MIND!



NEXT, DAN TURNER VISITS BIG, BEAUTIFUL NANCY O'DARE IN THE GIRL'S DRESSING ROOM.

PICKLE ME IN BRINE, IF IT ISN'T HANDSOME DAN, THE DEMON DICK!

SALUTATIONS, SUGAR! COULD I SEE YOU ALONE A MINUTE?



WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND? IF IT'S KISSES...NIX DURING WORKING HOURS!

THIS IS BUSINESS, BABE. TELL ME ABOUT YOUR FEUD WITH CARY GREGG.



I'D LIKE TO TWIST THAT TWIRP INTO A PRETZEL! HE GOT ME TO INVEST IN A PHONY OIL WELL, AND I LOST MY SHIRT!

YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO GOT STUCK, BUT I HOPE YOU HAVEN'T BEEN MAKING FOOLISH THREATS.



TURNER REPORTS TO SKINNY SWANSON...

...SO YOU SEE... THE BUT GOLLY, HE
ONLY ONES HATING LOST MORE THAN
GREGG ARE THE SUCKERS THEY DID! IT
WHO LOST DOUGH IN WIPE ME OUT,
AN OIL WELL HE RECOMMENDED.
TOO, I HEADED THE DRILLING SYNDICATE!

I'LL KEEP A GLIM
ON HIM TO SEE
THAT NOBODY TRIES
TO KNOCK HIM OFF.

NUTS! HE PROBABLY
JUST IMAGINED THOSE
THREATS, BUT I HOPE
HE'S IN SHAPE FOR
THIS SCENE I'M ABOUT
TO SHOOT.



THE FAKE BRICKS ARE PAINTED ON CANVAS OVER THICK SOFT PADDING... SEE? YOU CAN'T GET HURT!

I... I'M SCARED JUST THE SAME!



FOR THE SLIDE, YOU'LL RIDE DOWNHILL ON THE BELLYBOARD JUST LIKE MECHANICS USE TO GET UNDER A JALOPY!

BUT SOMETHING MIGHT GO WRONG... I NEVER TRAINED IN SLAPSTICK LIKE YOU DID!



AW, FOR LAND'S SAKE! I'LL SHOW YOU HOW IT'S DONE AND PROVE IT ISN'T DANGEROUS!

THIS WAS HOW I DID IT HUNDREDS OF TIMES IN THE OLD SILENT DAYS!

SWANSON BLAMS DOWNHILL ON THE BELLYBOARD...AND SMACKS HEAD-ON INTO THE PADDED WALL!

GOSH, THAT'S REALISTIC!

IT GIVES ME THE SHUDDERS!

NANCY O'DARE SPRINTS DOWN-HILL...

SOMETHING'S WRONG! SKINNY ISN'T GETTING UP! HE'S HURT!

HIS NECK'S BROKEN! HE'S DEAD!

CARY GREGG MAKES AN ASTOUNDING ACCUSATION...

BUT HOW COULD HE BE KILLED AGAINST A PADDED WALL?

MAYBE YOU BROKE HIS NECK WHEN YOU PICKED HIM UP IN YOUR ARMS!

TAKE THAT BACK, YOU CREEP, OR I'LL TEAR YOU APART!

AR-RGH...QUIT... YOU'RE ONLY PROVING YOU'VE GOT ENOUGH STRENGTH TO KILL A MAN!



NANCY, STOP! YEAH! LAY OFF HIM!

BUT I DIDN'T KILL SKINNY! I LOVED HIM!

SURE, AND HE JILTED YOU! THAT WAS YOUR MURDER MOTIVE!



TURNER UNCOVERS THE KILL METHOD...

QUIET, EVERYBODY! HERE'S WHAT BUMPED SWANSON...A STEEL PLATE BEHIND THE CANVAS INSTEAD OF SOFT PADDING! THAT MAKES IT PREMEDITATED CROAKERY!

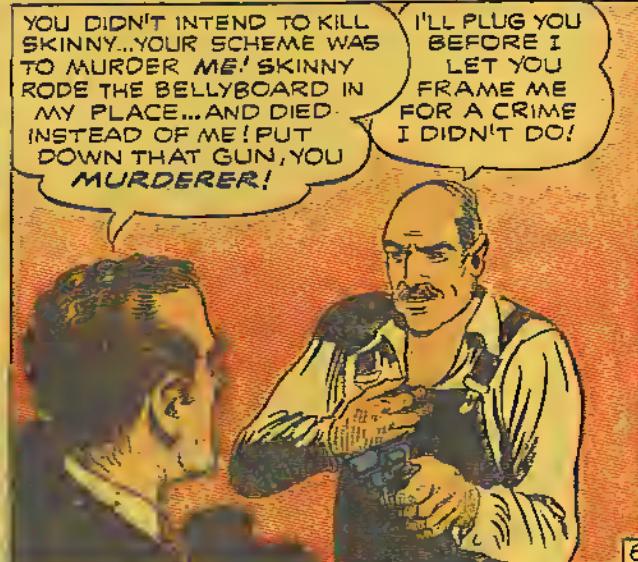


THEN YOU'RE GUILTY, VARNUM! AS PROP MAN, YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO COULD REPLACE THE PADDING WITH SHEET STEEL!

IT'S A LIE! I WOULDN'T KILL SKINNY!

YOU DIDN'T INTEND TO KILL SKINNY...YOUR SCHEME WAS TO MURDER ME! SKINNY RODE THE BELLYBOARD IN MY PLACE...AND DIED. INSTEAD OF ME! PUT DOWN THAT GUN, YOU MURDERER!

I'LL PLUG YOU BEFORE I LET YOU FRAME ME FOR A CRIME I DIDN'T DO!



DROP THE HEATER!!

Y-YOU LOUSY FLATFOOT!



HANDS UP, FOLKS... AND NOTICE THE STEEL PLATE IS GONE FROM THE WALL. THERE'S SOFT PADDING IN ITS PLACE!

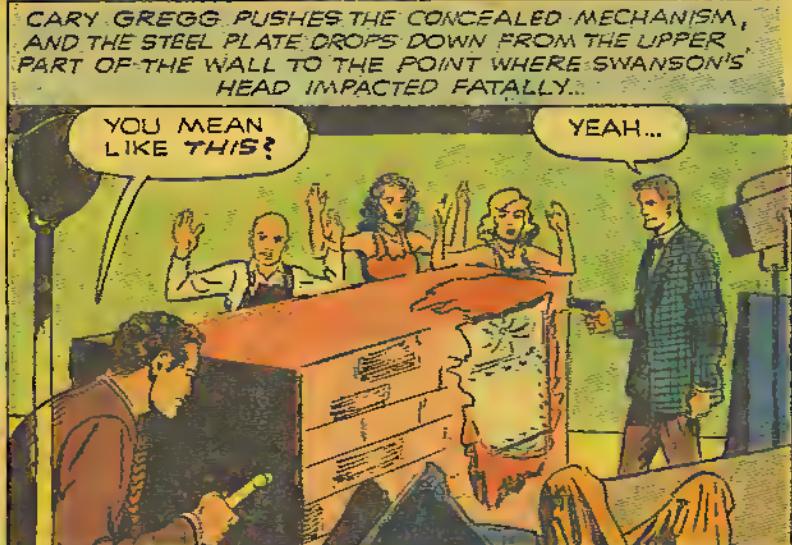
BUT HOW COULD THAT HAPPEN?



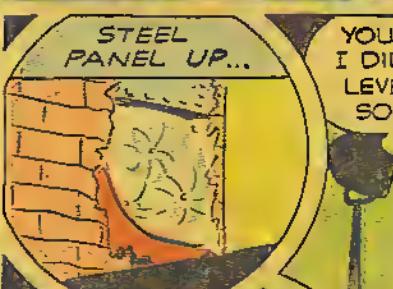
I'LL EXPLAIN THE KILL-GIMMICK! GREGG, YOU CAN HELP ME BY WORKING THE HIDDEN LEVER IN THE END OF THE WALL!



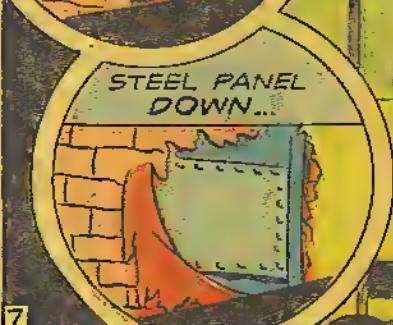
CARY GREGG PUSHES THE CONCEALED MECHANISM, AND THE STEEL PLATE DROPS DOWN FROM THE UPPER PART OF THE WALL TO THE POINT WHERE SWANSON'S HEAD IMPACTED FATALLY...



STEEL PANEL UP...



STEEL PANEL DOWN...



YOU'VE JUST CONFESSED YOUR KILL-GUILT, GREGG! I DIDN'T TELL YOU EXACTLY WHERE THE GIMMICK LEVER WAS LOCATED... SO HOW COULD YOU FIND IT SO FAST UNLESS YOU ALREADY KNEW? UNLESS YOU PLANTED THE CONTRAPTION YOURSELF!



YOU WERE BANKRUPTED BY SKINNY SWANSON'S OIL WELL SYNCIATE, SO YOU CROAKED HIM FOR REVENGE FIRST YOU INSTALLED THE SLICING PANEL IN THE PADDED WALL!

N-NO!
NO, I...



THEN YOU PRETENDED TO GET TELEPHONE THREATS. EVEN YOUR FEAR OF THE BELLYBOARD SCENE WAS FAKEO!

YOU C-CAN'T PROVE...



YOU JOBBED SWANSON INTO DEMONSTRATING HOW TO MAKE THE COMEDY SLICE... AND YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE STANDING NEAR THE WALL TO WORK THE LEVER SO HE WOULD SMASH HIS NOGGIN AGAINST HIDDEN STEEL INSTEAD OF SOFT PADDING!

TO MAKE IT WORSE, YOU EVEN TRIED TO SWITCH SUSPICION TO VARNUM AND NANCY O' DARE. IT'S A WONDER YOU DIDN'T ALSO TRY TO DOUBLE-CROSS YOUR SWEETIE, ELLEN MARSH!

CURSE YOU! YOU EVEN TRICKED ME INTO PUTTING MY FINGER PRINTS ON THE LEVER... SO I MAY AS WELL CONFESS!

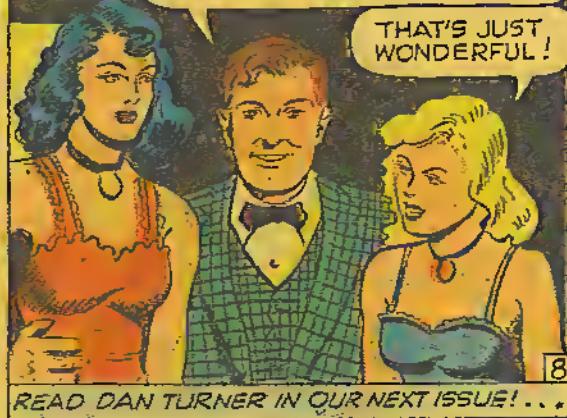


TURNER'S FRIEND, DAVE DONALDSON OF THE HOMICIDE SQUAD, ARRIVES...

SOMEBODY PHONED ME ABOUT A KILL! YEAH, AND HERE'S THE KILLER READY TO BE GASSED.



COME ON, KIDS. YOU EACH LOST A SWEETIE, BUT UNCLE DAN'LL HELP YOU FORGET YOUR GRIEF BY TAKING YOU BOTH OUT TO ONE OF THE PLUSH GLITTER JOINTS ON SUNSET STRIP,



THAT'S JUST WONDERFUL!

GAIL FORD - GIRL FRIDAY -

by Pierre Charpentier

THE HOTEL REXALTON, THE SWANKIEST HOSTELRY IN TOWN, IS CROWDED WITH CELEBRITIES, CHIEF OF WHOM IS IRENE SWERDNA, A GREAT BEAUTY, JUST ARRIVED FROM EUROPE. A FEW DAYS AFTER SHE HAS CHECKED IN, THE ROOM CLERK RECEIVES A FRANTIC CALL ...

NEVER A CHANCE TO REST! - THERE'S THE PHONE AGAIN -

YES, MADAME SWERDNA - WHAT? **WHAT?**

in the Case of

"THE HIDDEN MURDER"

THE ROOM CLERK AND THE HOUSE DETECTIVE HASTEN UPSTAIRS, AND...

THIS IS JUST THE WAY I FOUND HER!

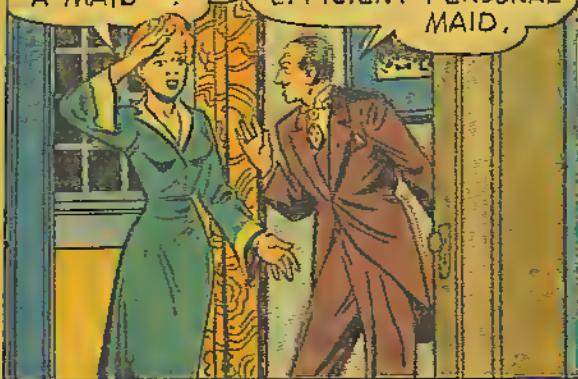
OH, PLEASE, COME UP RIGHT AWAY! MY MAID, MARY, HAS JUST COMMITTED SUICIDE! SHE HUNG HERSELF!

THAT DAME'S DEAD, ALL RIGHT. THIS IS OUT OF MY HANDS NOW. CALL UP THE HOMICIDE BUREAU. IT'S INSPECTOR MADSON'S BABY FROM HERE ON IN -

DESPITE THE TRAGEDY, IRENE SWERDNA BEWALES HER OWN TROUBLES.

WHAT'LL I DO - ?
I CANNOT GET ALONG WITHOUT A MAID - !

DON'T WORRY, MA'AM.
THE HOTEL WILL ASSIGN TO YOU AN EFFICIENT PERSONAL MAID.



LATER, THE INSPECTOR IS IN HIS OFFICE WITH HIS SECRETARY WHEN AN EXPECTED PHONE CALL COMES ...

WELL - ! THE MEDICAL EXAMINER JUST CALLED. THAT MAID DIED OF POISON INJECTED IN HER NECK; SHE WAS HANGED AFTER SHE WAS ALREADY DEAD !



THE HOTEL CLERK GETS A CALL ...

HELLO, INSPECTOR.
NO, WE HAVEN'T SENT A MAID UP THERE YET -

GOOD! I AM SENDING ONE TO YOU. WHEN SHE GETS THERE, GIVE HER AN OUTFIT AND SHE'LL REPORT TO THE SWERDNA SUITE -



WELL, GAIL, BELIEVE IT OR NOT, YOU'RE A HOTEL MAID!

OKAY, BOSS:
BEING A DOMESTIC SERVANT IS NEW TO ME, BUT I'LL DO THE BEST I CAN



LATER, GAIL REPORTS FOR WORK ...

I DON'T LIKE AMERICAN SERVANTS
BUT I SUPPOSE I'LL HAVE TO PUT UP WITH YOU.

I'LL TRY MY BEST
TO PLEASE YOU, MA'AM.



THAT EVENING, A CALLER ARRIVES ...

'LO, IRENE.
READY?

YES, REGGIE,
LET'S GO,



MUCH LATER, IRENE AND REGGIE RETURN TO THE HOTEL, PLASTERED TO THE GILLS...

CAN I HELP YOU, MA'AM?

YESS - PUT ME TO BED.

AS IRENE PASSES OUT, GAIL NOTICES HER RING...

THAT'S A STRANGE LOOKING RING--

AS SHE EXAMINES IT CLOSELY,
A SHARP NEEDLE SHAPS OUT...

OH-OH!
THAT NEARLY
STUCK ME! SAY-
THE INSPECTOR
SHOULD SEE THIS!

GAIL TAKES THE RING AS REGGIE LURCHES IN...

HEY - WHAT
-HIC - ARE YOU
DOING?

OH!

REGGIE LOCKS THE DOOR AND YELLS-

GIVE ME
THAT RING!
YOU'RE TOO
NOSEY, LET'S
HAVE IT!

NOTHING
DOING!

LET ME
PASS, YOU
DRUNKEN
CROOK!



HE'S COMING OUT! - IF I CAN JUST JUMP TO THAT FIRE ESCAPE OVER THERE - HE'S TOO DRUNK TO FOLLOW -

GAIL MAKES A FLYING LEAP ACROSS THE AREAWAY TO SAFETY...

SMART, AREN'T YOU? WELL, YOU WON'T GET AWAY. I'LL CATCH YOU YET!

GOSH - I HOPE I MAKE IT!

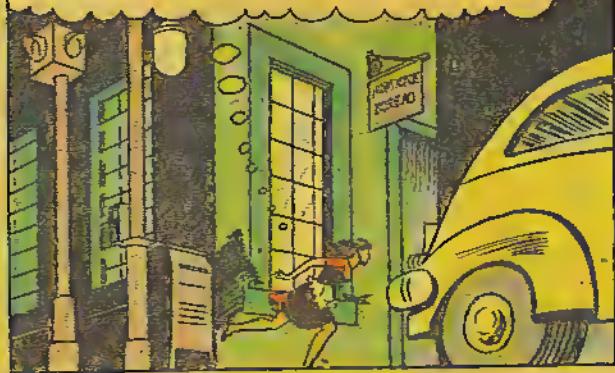
SHE SPEEDS DOWN THE FIRE ESCAPE TO THE STREET...

POLICE HEADQUARTERS -
STEP ON IT, CABBY !
I'M ON OFFICIAL BUSINESS
-AND IT'S IMPORTANT !

YES'M-

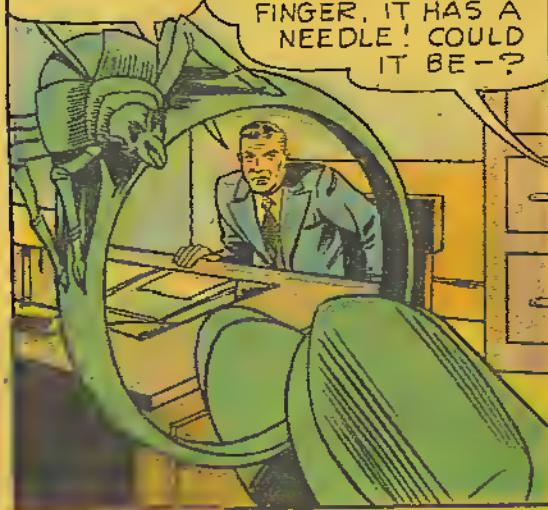


THE INSPECTOR'S LIGHT IS ON - HOPE
HE'S IN AT THIS UNEARTHLY HOUR !



WHY, GAIL -
WHAT'S UP ?

LOOK AT THIS RING -
I TOOK OFF SWERDNA'S
FINGER, IT HAS A
NEEDLE ! COULD
IT BE - ?



WHEN GAIL HAS TOLD HER STORY ...

YES - IT COULD BE THE POISON TOOL.
I'LL HAVE IT EXAMINED IMMEDIATELY,
BUT MEANWHILE, LET'S GO - WE'LL
GRAB THEM BEFORE THEY SCRAM -



AT THAT TIME, AT THE HOTEL ...

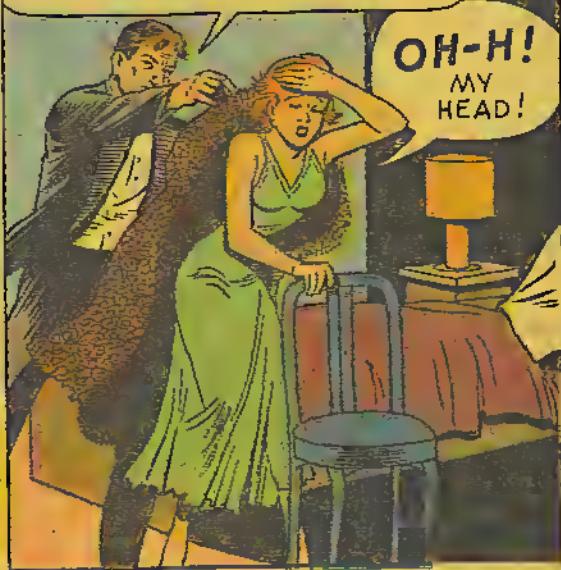
COME ON, IRENE, WAKE
UP ! THE COPS ARE WISE!
THAT GIRL GOT AWAY
WITH YOUR RING, I BET
SHE WAS PLANTED HERE
BY THE POLICE !

GO 'WAY !
LEMME
SLEEP !



NO TIME TO DRESS ! PUT ON THIS
COAT, WE'RE GETTING OUT !

OH-H !
MY
HEAD !



REGGIE PILOTS HIS UNSTEADY COMPANION ACROSS THE HOTEL LOBBY, JUST AS THE INSPECTOR AND HIS COPS COME IN THE DOOR...

WHA-!

STOP RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE!

REGGIE DROPS IRENE AND RUNS...

HALT!

THE FUGITIVE DRAWS A GUN, AND...

STAND BACK! YOU WILL NEVER TAKE ME, YOU - !



I WAS IN THE OFFICE LATE BECAUSE OF AN IMPORTANT CABLE FROM SCOTLAND YARD IN LONDON THAT EXPLAINS EVERYTHING. SHE WAS A NOTORIOUS SWINDLER ON THE OTHER SIDE, SPELL "SWERDNA" BACKWARDS, AND YOU HAVE HER REAL NAME.



BUT WHAT ABOUT THAT POOR GAL WHO WAS HUNG?

THE MAID WHO CROSSED THE ATLANTIC WITH HER WAS A "YARD" AGENT; THEY MUST HAVE FOUND THAT OUT AND BUMPED HER.



THE LIMP FORMS OF THE TWO CROOKS ARE REMOVED FROM THE HOTEL LOBBY...

THOSE TWO WON'T CROSS THE OCEAN AGAIN FOR A LONG TIME - IF AT ALL!

HEAVE-HO, CLANCY.



BACK AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS...

HERE'S THE REPORT. THE NEEDLE CARRIED ENOUGH POISON TO CAUSE INSTANT DEATH! IT WAS A QUICK CASE, GAIL, GLAD WE GOT THAT WOMAN BEFORE SHE SPOTTED YOU AS A COP.



HEAVEN'S, INSPECTOR, I WONDER WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF I HADN'T BEEN ABLE TO JUMP FROM THAT FIRE ESCAPE?!! LUCKY THING YOU MADE ME TAKE GYMNASTIC LESSONS AT THE POLICE ACADEMY!



WELL, READERS, WE HOPE YOU HAVE ENJOYED THIS ISSUE OF CRIME SMASHERS. WRITE AND TELL US WHICH FEATURE YOU LIKED BEST.